DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 718 UD 022 071

TITLE	Community Consumer Newsletter Program, 1980-1981. Final Evaluation Report.
INSTITUTION	New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn, N.Y. Office of Educational Evaluation.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
BUREAU NO	5001-44-13501
PUB DATE	[81]
NOTE	15p.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	After School Programs; *Bilingual Students; *Consumer Education; High Schools; High School Students; *Journalism Education; Language Skills; *Low Income Groups; *Newsletters; Peer Relationship; Program Evaluation; *School Community Relationship; Spanish Speaking; Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Limited English Speaking; New York (Brooklyn)

ABSTRACT

The Community Consumer Newsletter Program (CCN), carried out in Bushwick High School (Brooklyn, New York), was designed to develop consumer skills among students and to pass on such skills to the community through bilingual (English/Spanish) newsletters. The 30 student participants, who were given stipends for their voluntary participation in CCN's after school activities, came from two groups: (1) low income Spanish speaking students with limited English proficiency, and (2) English/journalism students who were among the school's academic leaders. An evaluation was conducted to assess the program's success in each of the following categories: (1) student enrollment and attendance; (2) student learning and skill development; and (3) the production and distribution of consumer information materials. Because of cuts in funding, the program was not able to meet all of its objectives. Data collection problems also prevented the assessment of student achievement. Nonetheless, CCN staff concurred that the program was successful, as indicated by the development of good peer relations among student participants, positive community attitudes toward bilingual students, increased proficiency in English and writing skills among Spanish speaking students, increased awareness of consumer rights and responsibilities, and positive impact of the program on other areas of the curriculum. (JCD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED212718

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Project Number: 5001-44-13501

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

COMMUNITY CONSUMER NEWSLETTER PROGRAM
1980-1981

Coordinator: Helen Tarail

Prepared By The
ANCILLARY SERVICES EVALUATION UNIT
Sharon Walker, Manager
Jim Meier, Consultant

NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION
RICHARD GUTTENBERG, ADMINISTRATOR

UD022071

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		PAGE
I.	Introduction	1
II.	Program Descriptions	2
III.	Evaluation Design	6
IV.	Findings	7
V.	Summary And Conclusions	12

I. INTRODUCTION

The Community Consumer Newsletter program (hereinafter referred to as CCN) aimed to improve the consumer skills of low-income high school students, at least half of whom were Spanish speaking with limited English proficiency (LEP). In addition, the program sought to increase the consumer knowledge of the students, their parents, and other low-income community residents. The project, designedd to combine student work experience with schooling, evolved out of a prior year's (1978-1979) consumer education project (known as the Linkage project), which produced a workbook, The High School Student as Worker/ Consumer. As a result of that prior effort, pilot activities including student wrokshops and the use of the workbook were incorporated into the CCN program. The CCN program began a year after the Linkage project ended, so, with the exception of some philosophic and programatic similarities, the programs were distinct.

The proposal for the CCN project was developed by the Office of Occupational and Career Education with input from the Bureau of Home Economics. The funding level for the CCN project was substantially lower than requested, necessitating modifications in the scope of the project with resultant disruptions to start-up staffing. At least partly as a consequence of these factors, few of the initial program objectives were entirely accomplished.

With funds from the Consumer Education Program of the U.S. Department of Education, the CCN project operated under the supervision of the Bureau of Home Economics, Office of Occupational and Career Education of the New York City Board of Education.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The CCN project was designed as a one-year voluntary after school program offering training workshops, instruction, and supervision on consumerism and consumer journalism to high school students in Bushwick High School, culminating in the production of monthly community consumer newsletters. As originally planned, students were to meet once weekly for two hours after school. The Youth Employment Training Program (YETP) screened students for eligibility in CCN, since students were paid a stipend (minimum wage) for the after-school time they devoted to the program. As articulated by the Office of Occupational and Career Education, the long range goal was to prepare students "for consumer responsibilities in the world of work."

As a result of CCN activities, students were expected to produce and distribute throughout their community bilingual (Spanish and English) newsletters and shopper sheets which, in turn, would transfer the benefits of their learning to other community residents. In addition, the program design called for peer tutoring and task performance teams to include both LEP students (academically deficient) and English/journalism students (generally the academic leaders of the school). Student participation on these teams, which were responsible for researching, writing, translating, proofing, and distributing the consumer newsletters and shopper sheets, was expected to lead to the acquisition of student consumer skills, improved English language skills for LEP students, and more proficient writing skills for both the English/journalism and LEP students. Finally, CCN program staff was to develop "program information packets," including a report, consumer resource

lists, workshop formats newsletter formats and guides, and program sample products, and to disseminate these to teachers in other secondary schools in New York City and elsewhere.

PROGRAMMATIC REVISIONS

As noted earlier, the CCN program was funded at a level substantially below what had been requested. Funding was $25,700, a 50 percent reduction from the $52,600 originally sought. At the inception date, October 1, 1980, the project was hampered by staffing difficulties. Partly due to the funding problem, a person with the appropriate credentials to fill the coordinator slot and willing to work on a part-time hourly basis was not identified until mid-December, just before the holiday break.

The coordinator worked only one day a week. Her responsibilities included administrative, organizational, and clerical work, but time did not allow for any consumer education instruction. However, in addition to routine activities, workshops were organized, resource and instructional materials were given to the teachers for student use in research, an advisory council was formed and convened, and site visits were made to the afterschool classes and to community centers where the news sheets were distributed.

Other unexpected setbacks were imposed on the project which prevented the full realization of its objectives. The home economics teacher at Bushwick High School, who had been expected to play a principle role, was unable to carry out the commitment. The two teachers hired to work with the students (a bilingual teacher and a journalism teacher) did not have backgrounds in consumer education.

TABLE 1

Modification Of Program Aims

Program Element	Original Proposal	Revised Plan	Actual Accomplishments
Budget	$52,600	$25,700	$25,7000
# Schools	2 high schools	1 high school	1 high school
# Students (Journalism) (LEP)	96 (48) (48)	40 (20) (20)	24 (16) (8)
# Workshops (Consumerism) (Consumer Journalism)	4 (2) (2)	2 (1) (1)	2 (1) (1)
# Teacher Orientation Workshops	1	0	0
# Newsletters	6	3	1
# Shopper Sheets	12	9	6
# Copies distributed	5000 each	5000 each	5000 each
Advisory Council Meetings	2	1	1
Teacher program information packets include:	Report; formats for workshops and student publications; resource lists; samples	Same	Same
Conduct final evaluation workshop	Yes	No	No
Conduct final evaluation	Yes	Yes	Yes

A consequence of these factors was that several of the project objectives tasks were not entirely accomplished. Reductions in the scope of the project activities were formulated and summarized in Table 1. Despite these problems, however, project activities began on time under the supervision of the journalism teacher and the LEP teacher at Bushwick High, the staff of the Bureau of Home Economics, and the school-based Assistant Principal Supervisor of Home Economics.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Three program perormance objectives were formulated:

1a. By June 1981, approximately 80 percent of the 40 students enrolled in the program will attend workshops.

1b. They will have learned consumer skills as measured by a pre and posttest.

2. By June 1981, a total of three consumer newsletters and nine shopper sheets will be published and distributed in participating schools, other public and nonpublic schools, and in various locations throughout the community.

III. EVALUATION DESIGN

Aspects of the program which are examined through this evaluation may be organized in three categories:

1. Student enrollment and attendance at program sponsored workshops, class sessions, and other activities.

2. Student learning and skill development, as evidenced by pre and posttests.

3. The production and distribution of consumer information materials. Student written and produced materials included newsletters and shopper sheets; materials written and assembled by program staff comprise the teacher information packet.

Because the established program objectives by and large are quantitative, this evaluation is based primarily on review and verification of program-produced materials. Qualitative analysis of program-produced materials was not undertaken. The various records and instruments employed in the evaluation are summarized as follows:

Program Element	Record/Instrument
Student attendance	Payroll records (All students were enrolled in the YETP and received a stipend, $3.35/hr., for program attendence).
Occurrence of workshops	Program agenda and workshop observation by evaluator
Student learning and skill development	Pretest and posttest (See Appendix A)
Production of student materials	Newsletters and Shopper Sheets
Distribution of student materials	Phone calls and visits to sites on distribution list
Teacher information packet	Review of product

IV. FINDINGS

Working under adverse circumstances, the CCN program nevertheless went ahead with modified program targets, as noted earlier. The findings which follow reveal that few of the specific program tasks or objectives, as revised, were entirely achieved. However, according to testimony from the teachers and the program coordinator, notable benefits consistent with program goals did occur.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT, ATTENDANCE, AND PROGRAM SPONSORED WORKSHOPS

The program began with 20 Bushwick High School students. By February, the registration increased to 30 students, a level at which it officially remained. Of this total, approximately 10 students were considered part of the LEP group, and 20 students part of the journalism group. Although more students were initally recruited in October 1980, by May the actual program enrollment had decreased to 24 students, eight of whom were bilinqual LEP students, and 16 English-speaking journalism students. A significant reason for the low involvement of LEP students, as stated by the LEP teacher, was the difficulty of selecting students who were proficient enough in English to perform adequately with the higher academic achieving English/journalism students. Also, students dropped out for various reasons, such as participation in team sports and other employment. Clearly, the target of 40 enrolled students, half in each of the two groupings was not attained. However, the over-all attendance rate was 89 percent, well above the objective.

The target for workshops was met. Two workshops were conducted, one on consumerism and one which combined consumerism and journalism.

An unexpected outcome of the project was the involvement of the printing teacher and one printing student at Bushwick High School. The journalism, LEP, and printing teachers combined their efforts, with the result that most of the issues (four shopper sheets and one Newsletter) were produced in printed rather than mimeographed form.

STUDENT LEARNING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

According to CCN program staff, a teacher-devised true/false pretest was administered at the beginning of the program (January) and the same test was given in May as a posttest. However, the pretest was given to the students to take home and test scores were never recorded. In addition, although program staff asserted that a posttest was administered at the end of the program, they were not able to supply evidence of this or a tabulation of student scores on those tests. Consequently, no data are available either for achievement on these tests or for analysis of student gains.

While it is impossible, under the circumstances, to draw any conclusions based on testing, the project teachers assert that a great deal of learning occurred in the areas of writing skills, English-speaking skills, knowledge of consumer rights and responsibilities, and consumer investigative and pricing/shopping skills.

INFORMATION MATERIALS

Of the nine "shopper sheets" planned, six were actually produced. One of three planned issues of the newsletter, a longer publication, has been produced. Thus, the program targets for student-produced materials were not achieved. According to the project teachers, these targets were unrealistic.

The plan called for three teams of about 15 students, each to produce, research, write, and translate three shopper sheets and one newsletter during the five month period from January to May. This would have meant one product per team every five weeks, with students initially meeting once a week for two hours. Workshops and guest speakers also had to fit into that schedule. By March, it became clear that extra funds would be available (perhaps because of the reduced enrollment level), and those monies were applied to student stipends, thereby increasing program meetings to twice a week. Still there were not enough participants in the program to produce all the materials originally intended.

In practice, while the English/LEP team concept was originally attempted, it was soon discarded in favor of small groups consisting of all English/journalism students or all LEP students. The group make-up changed with subject matter; individuals were assigned according to their interest in the topic currently under consideration. The English-speaking students wrote articles in English which were translated into English themselves. The LEP students also wrote articles in simple English and translated them into Spanish.

The two-hour after-school sessions once a week, and later twice a week, were not sufficient to do all the work involved. Other problems arose. The students encountered difficulty going from store to store for comparison shopping. They were confused by the different size packages and lack of unit pricing. Most difficult was the fear of going to stores in dangerous neighborhoods, a fear particularly expressed by the female students. In some instances, the storekeepers were hostile.

The shopper sheets which were produced were distributed to 17 different locations. Phone calls to 13 of these sites located no one

who was aware of the shopper sheets. The lack of verification that the shopper sheets were distributed may be due to having talked only with peole who either did not come in contact with the handouts or did not remember them. In either case, though, the data at least suggest that this program did not have high visibility in the community.

The materials to be written and assembled by program staff, the teacher information packets, are now available for distribution through the Bureau of Home Economics. Their use is incorporated in a proposal in preparation as a means of improving students' basic skills through home economics.

STAFF IMPRESSION OF PROGRAM

The two teachers and the program coordinator of CCN feel the program was a success in ways not captured by the data. Program benefits which they feel occurred include the following:

-- Good relationships developed between the students, particularly important because poor students and top students, who normally would have very little contact, got to know and respect each other.

-- As a result of the new relationships, the attitude of the entire school community toward the bilingual students changed for the better.

-- Bilingual students became more proficient in English and the writing skills of the journalism students also improved.

-- Students learned about their rights and responsibilities as consumers as well as how to investigate consumer issues.

-- Students experienced resistance from, and other difficulties with, some shopkeepers, from which they learned certain realities about the consumer world, for example, the necessity of knowing one's rights and demanding them.

-- Students traveled to new areas of the city and met with officials and other spokespersons, which were valuable broadening experiences.

-- The program demonstrated that teachers untrained in consumer education, but greatly interested in the subject, could accomplish much as teachers of consumerism.

-- There is carry-over from the project into other areas of the school curriculum. One of the project teachers used a lesson on consumer complaints to teach letter-writing in a basic English course.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The CCN work/study program was launched under unfavorable circumstances, beset with funding cutbacks, staff changes, difficulties in filling a key staff position, and restrictions in initiating program activities. In such a situation, it is perhaps not surprising that program targets, even though revised, were not completely attained. To summarize, of the revised program activities and objectives, only about half the intended number of students fully participated, the planned workshops were conducted, six rather than nine projected shopper sheets were produced, one of the three planned newsletters was produced, and program information packets for use by other teachers was developed.

Aside from the start-up difficulties, some of the program targets may have been unrealistic: too many products may have been expected of students for whom the subject area and investigative skills were new and too little time was allotted for carrying out all the tasks.

Despite the shortcomings in performance, program staff assert the program is a good one. They feel there were many important benefits to the students, the teachers involved, the school and the community. They state that they wish there were money available for them to continue their involvement in the program next year.